

Neamț County



County overview

Location

An old region of the Moldavia province, with settlements that reflect the unity of tradition and the features of a particular culture, well preserved throughout the Romanian space, Neamț county is located in the North-East Region of Romania, covering a total area of **5.896 Km²** (aprox. 2.5% of the country's territory), along the valleys of the Bistrița and Siret rivers.

Neamț county is surrounded by Suceava county in the North, Harghita in the West, Bacău in the South and Vaslui and Iași in the East. It is part of the North-Est Development Region, which also constitutes the Eastern border of the European Union.

From an administrative point of view, Neamț county includes two municipalities, Piatra Neamț and Roman, three towns, Bicăz, Târgu Neamț, and Roznov, 78 communes and 347 villages. The most important city, Piatra Neamț, is the capital of the county.

Population

According to the last census (*conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in August 2017*), the population of the county was of **575.857 inhabitants**. Approximately 35% of the population live in an urban environment, while the rest live in rural areas. The most important communes, as per the number of inhabitants (between 7,500 and 10,000) are: Săbăoani, Pipirig, Răucești, Vânători Neamț. The highest population density can be found in Roman (with 2,213 inhabitants/km²), while Bicăz holds the lowest density (with 60 people/km²). In rural areas, the lowest population density can be found in the mountain regions (50 people/km²).

Infrastructure

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) plays a crucial role in ensuring the freedom of movement of passengers and goods in the European Union. According to the "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Union guidelines for the development of the Trans European Transport Network" in the North-East Region, Neamț County is connected with TEN-T road and rail networks, either directly or indirectly through transport nodes, Piatra Neamț and Roman being directly crossed by the European transport network, through E85 (DN2), E581 (DN24, DN24B), DN 12, DN 15, DN 15C, DN 15B, DN 28A, E 583 (DN 28), E574 (DN11) - on road and through M500, Line 501 - on railway.

The main roads of international, national and regional interest on the territory of Neamț county are:

- E85: UNITED KINGDOM Border - Suceava - Roman - Bacău - Focșani - Buzău - Bucharest - BULGARIA Border
- E583: Roman - Săbăoani - Iași - Sculeni - MOLDAVIA
- DN2: Bucharest - Urziceni - Buzău - Râmnicu Sărat - Focșani - Adjud - Bacău - Roman - Suceava - Rădăuți - UNITED KINGDOM Border
- DN12C: Gheorgheni - Bicăz
- DN15: Turda - Târgu Mureș - Reghin - Toplița - Piatra Neamț - Bacău
- DN15B: Poiana Largului - Târgu Neamț - Cristești
- DN15C: Piatra Neamț - Băltărești - Târgu Neamț - Fălticeni
- DN15D: Piatra Neamț - Roman - Vaslui (DN24)

In addition, part of the E85 European road (Bucharest – Bacău – Roman – Suceava – Siret) goes through Neamț county. When it comes to aerial transport, Piatra Neamț, the capital of the county, is located at a distance of 58 km from Bacău airport, 122 km from Suceava airport and 131 km from Iași airport.

For the time-frame 2018-2023, the public authorities are considering investing in the infrastructure to ensure a better accessibility, safe transportation and also reduce atmospheric pollution and improve the living conditions of residents.

As for the telecommunication infrastructure, landline networks and mobile GSM systems are well developed in Neamț county.

Natural resources and protected areas

Neamț county has a great forestry potential. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2017 Neamț county ranked second in the North-Est Region (after Suceava county) in terms of the total volume of timber harvested. Forest vegetation has also favored the development of a diverse and rich wildlife for hunting purposes. A huge source of revenue, though little exploited at present, consists of forest fruits, mushrooms and specific herbs, all of them valuable resources for the food, cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries.

Neamț county is highly significant at a national level in terms of the total surface of the protected natural areas throughout the county:

- Ceahlău area - 19.183 acres
- Cheile Bicazului – Hășmaș area – 17.082 acres
- Vânători – Neamț area – 75.876 acres

Tourism

Neamț County is a land full of beauty and spirituality displaying spectacular natural landscapes, inhabited by people who are famous for their moral pursuit and hospitality. Harmoniously blending the traditional way of living with modern innovations, the county of Neamț is, nowadays, one of the main touristical destinations and landmarks of Romania, annually attracting visitors from all over the world. Tourists can spend a very special holiday in Neamț County, witnessing the villages that preserve the peaceful atmosphere of the past, and enjoying socialising with people who still respect the "customs of the earth".

The stepwise arrangement of the relief, the mild climate and the rich hydrographic network made up by the by the Siret, Bistrița, Moldova and Cracău rivers enhances the tourist attraction of the whole land, blessed with a specific flora and fauna, in exquisite harmony with the natural and spiritual nature of the settlements.

The geographically diverse landscape, with many picturesque places, the historical monuments and artistic heritage, the originality of ethnographic and folklore elements and the balneal resorts are just a few of the great tourist attractions that have favored the development of several forms of tourism: **cultural tourism, ecumenical tourism, mountain tourism, rural tourism, ecotourism, balneal tourism and business tourism.**

But Neamț County is known to tourists not only for cultural and historical pilgrimage tours, but also for crafts that reflect the cultural heritage of the region: folk costumes, pottery, rugs and tapestries, Easter eggs, painting icons on glass and wood, masks, traditional art objects and so on. Gastronomy with regional specifics complements the above-mentioned picture, being a very good reason for promoting the area.

According to the Tourism Roundup 2017, provided by the National Statistics Institute in 2016, there were 235 tourist accommodation establishments with accommodation functions in Neamț county, with a total number of 7.072 accommodation places in accommodation units of 3, 2 and 4 stars level of comfort, concentrated especially in the western part of the county, mainly around Piatra Neamț, Târgu Neamț and Durău resort. The index of net use was about only 20.7% and the average length of stay of 1.9 days / tourist.

In the context of a rich touristic potential and an insufficiently unused accommodation capacity, the area stringently needs investments in the direction of leisure and balneal tourism.

Cultural - ecumenical tourism

Neamț county has a rich historical heritage, as evidenced by its museums (*The History and Archaeology Museum, The Arts Museum, The Ethnography and Folklore Museum*), memorial houses (*Calistrat Hogaș, Ion Creangă, Mihail Sadoveanu, Veronica Micle*), medieval fortresses (*Neamț Fortress*), cathedrals, and especially by its internationally known monasteries – Agapia, Văratec, Sihăstria, Bistrița, Horaița, Neamț – true milestones for any tourist route in the county.

One of the most interesting and popular tourist attractions in Neamț is the “Nicolae Popa” Museum located in Târpești, which shows a rich cultural heritage: from traditional caroler masks, to naive painting, numismatic collections or collections of irons, old agricultural tools and books.

The Ethnography Museum is interesting as well, showing costumes over 200 years old. The black ceramic objects made in the village of Marginea are also extremely special and unique in the world. We shouldn't omit the artist's sculptures either, whose cultural style is surprising.

A significant attraction of Piatra Neamț, the capital of the county, is the medieval complex located in the centre of the city, built during the reign of Stephen the Great, consisting of the Royal Court (dating from 1468), the St. John Church and the Bell tower (1497).

As for the Târgu Neamț area, an important historical landmark is the Neamț Fortress, recently rehabilitated through a Regional Infrastructure Development Programme. This area is suitable for practicing sports in every season, as well as for organizing expeditions or hiking sessions on the special trails. The monasteries in Târgu Neamț area are an impressive attraction for tourists who arrive in Moldavia, while also providing accommodation opportunities in a uniquely natural environment.

Mountain tourism

The central tourist attraction of the county, with the most intense tourist influx, is the Ceahlău area, with the Hășmaș, Bistrița, Tarcău, and Stânișoara mountains. This area can be reached using the road network that connects Transylvania to Moldavia, through Cheile Bicazului gorge. Characterized by a great diversity of elements, the vegetation and fauna of Ceahlău Mountain give it an inestimable scientific value, besides its famous biogeographical greatness.

Ceahlău is the most towering mountain of Moldavia, a major tourist attraction of the country and a place that has been the subject of many myths and legends. The highest points of the mountain are two peaks called Toaca (1904m) and Ocolașul Mare (1907m). At 1021 meters altitude, tourists can be amazed by Duruitoarea waterfall, whose streams fall on a rock wall from a 25m height. The entire area is rich in natural resources, flora and fauna species that have been declared endemic or natural monuments, as well as an impressive hydrographic network.

Spectacular as it may be, the Durău resort is located at the foot of the mountain, at an altitude of 780-800 m, in a mountainous region that has been inhabited since the 18th century. The “St. Daniel the Hermit” Pastoral-Cultural Center is also located within the Durău monastery, whose church was painted by the famous Romanian painter Nicolae Tonitza. Recommended for rest and treatment, the resort stands as the starting point for many trails covering Ceahlău mountain, while also providing the opportunity to practice winter sports. The local tourist accommodation units have tempting offers for every season, being renowned for the culinary specialties they offer.

We can not fail to mention Cheile Bicazului – Hășmaș Natural Reservation, a natural monument which is a heaven for wildlife and over 600 species of plants, the park running on a total surface of more than 10 km.

Another famous attraction in the county is the Vânători Neamț National Park, located near Târgu Neamț, hosting a wide range of natural, cultural and historical values, along with the “Dragoș Vodă” Reservation, a bison reservation unique in Romania, which considerably increases the attractiveness of the area.

Rural tourism

One of the major advantages of Neamț county, in comparison to other well-known tourist destinations, is the preservation of the natural environment unaltered by human presence and activities. A true remedy against the busy city life, noise and stress factors, the Romanian village, a hearth of authentic spiritual values, offers many recreational opportunities and chances of getting to know the traditions of the Romanian people.

Most tourist accommodation units are situated in the areas of Ceahlău - Durău, Alexandru cel Bun, Târgu Neamț, Agapia, Piatra Neamț, Tarcău, Vânători Neamț, Almaș, Tupilați and Bicazu Ardelean.

Rural tourism in Neamț has a great potential for development, because the rural areas of the region preserve the cultural heritage, do not suffer from pollution and have multiple recreation options.

Balneal tourism

Neamț county has a relatively high potential for balneal treatments, given its underground mineral water resources. This type of tourism is commonly associated with mountain or leisure tourism. Thus, in the vicinity of Târgu Neamț, the Băltățești balneo-climaterical health resort is known for its chlorosodic, sulphated, bicarbonated, magnesium-rich and ferruginous waters. These are recommended in the treatment of rheumatic, neurological and other related diseases (endocrine, respiratory, dermatological).

The chlorurated, sodic and bromurated mineral waters of the Oglinzi resort resemble the waters of Ischl (Austria), Hall (Tirol), or Stotterheim (Weimar). Both the mineral waters and the mud here have been appreciated by many foreign tourists for their healing qualities.

Another balneal tourist attraction with untapped potential is the Negulești balneo-climateric health resort of the Piatra Șoimului commune, situated at a distance of 10 km from Roznov and 25 km from Piatra Neamț, which, in the past, used to have resort status.

Most of the above mentioned areas around the county are suitable for hosting a large variety of tourism: leisure and recreation tourism (*residential, short stay, itinerant, weekend*), educational tourism (*holiday, sports and artistic camps*), cultural tourism (*focusing on museums, memorials, monuments and architectural attractions*), leisure and amusement tourism, sports tourism (*hiking, horseback riding, adventure, climbing, diving, mountain biking, off-roading, kayaking, canoeing, paragliding, via ferrata and tyrolean traverse mountaineering*), therapeutic tourism. Business tourism can be hosted mainly in Piatra Neamț and Roman, due to the integrated facilities.

Investment opportunities

Why invest in Neamț county? Because of:

- ✓ its high touristic potential, characterized by an unique cultural and historical heritage, with various possibilities of capitalization and an emphasis on the leisure tourism, mountain tourism and balneal tourism, including wellness/spa-like prevention treatments; despite the existing potential, these types of tourism are not supported by facilities and leisure activities that generate sufficient incomes and jobs;
- ✓ the variety and complementarity of the natural resources of the subsoil and soil: carbonated and flat therapeutic mineral waters, rock salt, construction materials (*gravel, limestone, sand, clay*), oil and gas, bituminous schists, arable land, forests, pastures and meadows, wildlife;
- ✓ increasing demand for services in both public and private sector of the construction market;
- ✓ the possibility of developing the regional business environment as a result of establishing business incubators around the county;
- ✓ access to young and qualified labor force in the county, as compared to the average working population in the North-Est Region;
- ✓ the willingness of both public authorities and NGOs towards the concept of durable development, applied to rural areas, which involves modernizing the existing activities and introducing new ones, along with preserving good practices in relation to the environment, relaunching the traditional crafts, promoting ecological products and industry development, diversifying the economy in rural areas, without affecting their natural, historical and cultural heritage.

In terms of location, the following elements are helpful for business:

- abundant touristic resources;
- the proximity of the TNT-T transport network, especially the road-based one;
- the availability of primary resources (*agricultural, forest and mineral*), which favors primary and stage-based processing activities from the first half of the value chain;
- the proximity of the urban centers which encourages and triggers the economic development of the suburban areas, such as: Alexandru cel Bun, Dumbrava Roșie, Săvinești, Cordon, Horia, Vânători – Neamț, Tarcău, Tașca.

Legislation and information of interest for starting business

Regarding the legal system and the tax policy applicable to foreign companies already established or in the process of establishing premises or subsidiaries in the Neamț County, the provisions of civil and commercial law valid on the territory of Romania are to be considered.

Any subsidiary established in the county must be legally registered at Neamț Trade Registry.

The Romanian state applies the EU legislation regarding the joint taxation of subsidiaries of European companies in Romania. The specific norms and regulations can be found by consulting Law no.31/1990, with the subsequent modifications and completions, where one can find detailed information on starting a business in Romania.

The main institutions for business support infrastructure in Neamț are:

- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Neamț County;
- The Trade Register of Neamț County;
- The Agency for Labour Force Employment of Neamț County;
- The town halls and council of the county.

Main cities

Neamț county has four representative areas, according to its relief and local resources: Piatra Neamț and Roznov, Roman, Târgu Neamț and Bicăz.

- 1. Piatra Neamț area** - includes the towns of Piatra Neamț and Roznov, along with 25 other administrative units.

Main characteristics:

- long history: vestiges of the Cucuteni Civilization, dating from approx. 3.600 - 2.600 BC (the Eneolithic period), the discoveries in Poiana Ciresului (dating from the Paleolithic period), and also Ciritei, Lutărie, Văleni - Bolovoia area – dating from the second millennium BC, the fortified settlements of Bâta Doamnei and Cozla - 1st century BC - 1st century CE, the Petrodava Fortress, mentioned in Ptolemy's paper "Geographics" (87-165 BC); the first written mentions about Piatra Neamț appear in the Russian Chronicles (about 1387-1392) under the name Kamena (lit. "stone"); the Princely Court in Piatra Neamț was built between 1468-1475 by Stephen the Great; as a settlement, Roznov is mentioned for the first time in an Decree of Alexander I of Moldavia, dated April 8, 1419;
- a huge touristic potential, consisting of natural, cultural, historical, and ecumenical attractions: a ski track, a gondola lift, hiking trails, protected areas, mineral water springs, historical and architectural monuments, museums, memorials, churches, etc.;
- amazing landscape for sightseeing, that can be found in the picturesque valley of the Bistrița river: mountains, lakes and forests;
 - accessibility from all over the country (through the DN15 road) and towards the three international airports of Bacău, Iași and Suceava; also, the Bacău – Bicăz railway route;
- the ability to ensure passage to Transylvania through a unique mountainous area;
- great urban development possibilities, especially in matters like accessibilisation of tourism infrastructure and road infrastructure;
- well-developed traditional industrial sectors, such as construction works, plastics, machinery, metal and wood constructions;
- tradition in woodworking, as well as the textile and food industry;
- well-trained human resources and an above-average quality of the preuniversity education system;
- the possibility of using the current industrial assets;
- enough potential resources for aeolian energy, solar energy and energy provided by using biomass;
- relatively low risk of flooding and earthquakes;
- one of the most advanced waste management systems in Romania;

- 2. Roman area** - includes the town of Roman, as well as 27 other administrative units.

Main characteristics:

- long history: the first mentions of the city are found in the Letopis of Novgorod, dated around 1387 and in Nestor's chronicle; historians appreciate that the name of the city was taken over by Roman I Mușat, considered the founder of the city, which later played a major role as a metropolitan area of the Lower Lands of Moldova;
- natural conditions favorable to the economic development of the area;
- great accessibility from all across the country and towards the three international airports of Bacău, Iași and Suceava, being located along strategic national and European road and railways network through E85, E583, DN2;
- well-developed traditional industries, such as textiles, synthetic yarns and fibers, knitwear, mechanics, welded pipes, ceramic sanitary items, building materials;
- significant diversity of activities in the industrial and service sectors;
- the existence of vacant plots of land owned by the City Hall and needed for the economic expansion of the town;
- the possibility of using the current industrial platforms and capacities;
- highly qualified labor force at competitive prices (especially for the light industry), as well as an unemployment rate above the national average and a great representation of young population;

- a good cooperation between the business environment and public administration;
- multiple programs financed through European and government funds, with the purpose of modernizing the Roman metropolitan area (focusing on the infrastructure, environment, and social issues).

3. Bicz area - includes the town of Bicz and 11 other administrative units from the mountain area.

Main characteristics:

- long history: Bicz appears for the first time in a document issued by Prince Radu Mihnea on January 10, 1625; in 1855, Bicz is commemorated as a fair; in 1884 Bicz became a domain of Austro-Hungarian crown; between 1950-1960 the Bicz dam was build, having assigned the Lake Izvoru-Muntelui and the Stejaru hydroelectric power station;
- a great touristic potential, consisting of natural, cultural and historical attractions;
- an extremely favorable strategic location, which has turned it into the main access point to Ceahlău Mountain and other important tourist attractions of the region (Cheile Biczului and Cheile Șugăului, Toșorog Cave, Munticelu Cave, Tarcău Valley, the ruins of the Knez Palace, the Buhalnița Monastery, Durău and Borsec resorts, etc.);
- readily available human and material resources;
- the openness of the public administration towards diversifying the range of economic activities in the local business environment.

4. Târgu Neamț Town area

Main characteristics:

- long history: historical remains of the oldest dwellings dating from the Neolithic and the Bronze Age; Târgu Neamț is one of the oldest cities in Moldova, being documented at the end of the 1300s, in the Letopis of Novgorod; Târgu Neamț became the capital of Moldova, being a strategic settlement during the 15th-16th centuries; Petru I Mușat builded the Neamț Fortress during 1374-1391, an edifice which was expanded and consolidated by Stephen the Great and which, in time, became a medieval monument of a remarkable historical value;
- the town is nowadays certified as a tourist resort of national interest and the third largest town in Neamț county;
- amazing touristic potential, consisting of ecumenical, natural, cultural and historic attractions: the Neamț Fortress, the old monasteries of Neamț, Agapia, Văratec, Secu, Sihăstria, “Codrii de aramă” and “Codrii de argint”, the Vânători Neamț National Park, the holm and birch forests and, last but not least, the memorial houses of writers like Ion Creangă, Mihail Sadoveanu, Alexandru Vlahuță, and Veronica Micle;
- potential for balneal tourism: the Bălățești balneo-climateric health resort is famous for its chlorosodic, sulphated, bicarbonated, magnesium-rich and ferruginous waters, while the Oglinzi resort is known for its chlorurated, sodic and bromurated mineral waters;
- the road infrastructure of Târgu Neamț town allows for easy access to important national roads (DN15C, DN15B); train access is possible through the Bucharest – Suceava main line, while the nearest airport is in Suceava, at only 65 km from the town, with regular flights to Bucharest and Timișoara;
- tradition in wood processing, the textile and food industry.
- young and skilled local workforce.

Economic development

Economy

With reference to the overall economic performance, Neamț county is around average economic performance, calculated at regional level (for the North-Est Region), occupying the 4th place out of 6 counties.

The economic profile of Neamț county is determined by the balanced layout of relief forms, as well as the diversity of its natural resources. The energetic potential of the rivers, the vast forest areas, the natural pastures and hayfields, the richness and diversity of building materials in the mountains, the agriculture-favourable lands in the eastern part of the county, as well as the human resources, are all important sources that have been harnessed and that have contributed to the creation of a rather harmonious economic structure.

What is more, Neamț county has important natural and human resources and also know-how, characterized by high added value. These factors, brought together, could generate sustained economic growth, resulting in increasing the general welfare of the population and, at the same time, the visibility of the region as a highly profitable business infrastructure for investors.

In the past 10 years, the gross investments and the direct foreign investments have gone up in Neamț county, but there are still discrepancies of development compared to other counties so far.

As highlighted in a research conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, the total income of the population living in Neamț county, as well as in the entire North-East Region, was on a continuously upward trend during the 2012-2016 time frame, which positively impacted the quality of life of Neamț county residents.

Key indicators on labor

Labor resources in the county: 269.400 people (according to the a national statistical research conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 2015), the employment rate being of 70,6%, above the average of the North-Est Region (61,5%);

Civil active population: 178.700 people (54,1% of which are men and 45,9% of which are women).

The distribution of the civil employed population within sectors of the national economy is as follows:

- 24.37% in agriculture, fisheries and fisheries
- 0.70% in extractive industry
- 19.87% in processing industry
- 0.67% in production and supply of electric and thermal energy, gases, water and conditioned air
- 1.54% in water distribution, safety, waste management, decontamination activities
- 7.82% in constructions
- 14.89% in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- 5.22% in transportation and storage
- 2.12% in hotels and restaurants
- 2.27% in ICT
- 0.12% in financial brokering and insurances
- 0.04% in immobiliari transactions
- 2.22% in professional, scientific and technical activities
- 3.61% in administrative services and support service activities
- 2.41% in public administration and defense; social insurance from the public system
- 4.54% in education
- 4.72% in health and social assistance
- 0.94% in spectacles, cultural and recreational activities
- 1.92% in other service activities

The main fields which generated a high workforce demand, in 2017, were: constructions and public works, economy, Public Administration. As far as the job applications in Neamț county are concerned, the first most wanted activity sectors are as follows: trade, tourism and food, economy, electricity.

The services sector is currently gaining ground in the overall structure of the regional economy, as the vacancies on this segment have increased every year. Analysis showed that there are still plenty of opportunities for further development of the tertiary segment of the market, mainly due to the fact that the tourism is extremely well represented in both Piatra Neamț and the surrounding areas. In Piatra Neamț, because of the recent economic developments, the number of vacancies is considerably higher than in Roman, Târgu Neamț, Bicaz and Roznov.

The unemployment rate is on a downward trend, as compared to previous years. **The unemployment rate calculated for 2016 was of 5,9%**, compared to 6,1% in 2015 and 2014 and 6,2% in 2013 (Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo2&lang=ro&context=15>).

There is a direct connection between education and employment, in 2016 more than 75% of the total number of unemployed people in the county having been represented by graduates of secondary education. Out of the total number of registered unemployed people, the largest share consists of those aged between 40 and 49 (29%), followed by those aged between 50 and 55 years (16%). At the same time, out of the total number of unemployed people, the share of those aged between 15 and 24 (like young graduates) is of around 17,88%, which is an area of concern for the local authorities.

Education

The total number of students in the county was of 74.450 in 2016, out of which 84% are in pre-university education, 3,37% in post-secondary education and foremen training and only 1% are in higher education.

The research activity is relatively well represented in the region, Neamț county holding the 2nd rank after Iași county in terms of research and development activities, the county having 154 employees directly involved in R&D activity

- full time equivalent (both scientific and industrial research and development). The lack of public universities in the county is an issue that negatively impacts the development of the economic environment.

A priority of the further development strategies is the creation of continuous vocational training centers, along with the formal or informal certification of professional competencies acquired by people working in technical fields of activity. Actions towards this aim have already been adopted, but there is still a huge potential for future improvement in the education sector.

Given the developments in recent years, we can assume that the demand for qualified personnel will continue to rise in the fields of the residential and non-residential buildings and other buildings sectors, trade and tourism.

Health system

In Neamț county, by the end of year 2016, there were 1.411 health units, 403 doctors, 297 pharmacists and 3.055 environmental health staff.

The central administration has long been trying to stimulate the privatization and decentralization of the health system. There are serious business opportunities in the health sector, as the private medical market, unlike the public one, is highly competitive, forcing medical companies to permanently invest in equipments and human capital. Maintaining high quality standards is a sine qua non condition in the health system. In addition, a work environment favourable to development and decent wages offered to staff determine the local doctors not to consider going to work abroad.

Key sectors (Main industries)

The business environment and the structure of industrial production

An overview of the economic environment of the county shows that in Neamț there is a great diversity of economic activities, a significant number of economic sectors with serious potential for development, and insufficiently exploited natural and human resources. In other words, there is plenty of room for further business development.

The commercial activities have a significant share in the county economy, being relevant both in terms of number of companies, turnover, profit, jobs creation. **The construction sector** is important to the economic environment, because of the policies and the need for investing in the infrastructure, office buildings, commercial buildings and housing.

The agriculture and food industry, forestry, logging and wood processing are correlated on extended values chains, in order to raise the added value and distribute profits in a fair manner. Within the manufacturing industry, the most important branches are **the textile industry** and **the machinery industry**. The tertiary sector become dominant in late years, especially due to the multitude of services offered by local entrepreneurs. The high dynamics in this case is due to the various opportunities brought on by European-funded projects.

According to statistic data, in 2015, in Neamț county the main industrial activities were: **wholesale and retail trade** (3.179 units); **processing industry** (1.264 units); **constructions** (815 units); **professional, scientific and technical activities** (713 units) out of a total of 8.788 active local units based in the county.

In matters of entrepreneurial intensity, there were 8.491 registered companies in 2015, in Neamț (Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo2&lang=ro&context=55>). The territorial distribution of firms is highly heterogeneous, concentrating in the urban areas and the neighboring regions, and being very poorly distributed in those areas located away from important road and rail traffic corridors.

Within the economic environment of the county, the share of SMEs is over 95%. Regarding the areas of interest for SMEs, although trade in all its forms prevails, the primary (agriculture and forestry), secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (services) sector coexist peacefully at the top. However, economic activities defined as emerging are almost missing from the local economic context and represent a strategic priority for further development.

The number of people working in SMEs (small and medium enterprises) has continuously increased over the past years, partly because of the restructuring process that affected some of the large companies established in the region.

As regards the demand for construction works in both public and private sectors, there has been a marked increase in the last three years in the civil, residential and non-residential construction segment, not only in Piatra Neamț, but all over the county. The large increase in housing was attributed to the stabilization of prices and the increase of the population's confidence in the economic stability of the business environment.

The touristic potential of Neamț county

One of the county's greatest strengths and sources of income and added value is tourism.

Neamț is among the counties of Romania with a very high tourist potential: countless historical monuments - wooden or built churches, monasteries, history, art, ethnography, natural sciences museums, which host collections of great value (*Cucuteni Culture*), memorial houses (*Ion Creangă, Calistrat Hogaș, Mihail Sadoveanu, Veronica Micle*), Neamț Fortress, private ethnographic museums (*Nicolae Popa, Vasile Găman*), traditional crafts, protected natural areas (*Ceahlău National Park, Vânători - Neamț Natural Park, Dragos-Vodă, Cheile Bicazului, Șugăului Gorges, Lake Pângărați, Lake Vaduri, Lake Bâta Doamnei, Lake Ceușel - the largest natural lake in the country*), natural areas with a picturesque landscape (*Bistrita Valley, Tarcău Valley, Lake Izvoru Muntelui*). Also, there are three therapeutic mineral springs in the county: Bălătești, Oglinzi, Negulești, of which only Bălătești resort is in a functional state.

Neamț County ranks 6th in the country as far as the tourism potential is concerned, according to a ranking included in the Master Plan for Tourism developed by the Ministry of Tourism of Romania.

There are 4 certified tourist resorts in Neamț County, namely: Piatra Neamț and Târgu Neamț - tourist resorts of national interest and Bălătești and Durău resorts - tourist resorts of local interest.

The tourist potential of Piatra Neamț, Târgu Neamț and, on an extended level, of the entire county, is a determinant factor of the continuous growth of the demand for leisure services in the region. Traditional manifestations and leisure facilities are particularly popular here, giving the area diversity and becoming a central point of attraction.

In **Neamț County Development Strategy** (time frame 2014-2020), there are mentioned six general objectives for the time frame 2014-2023:

1. A county with increased intra- and inter-regional mobility
2. Easily accessible medical services
3. High quality social services, appropriate to the needs of the population
4. A healthy environment
5. A competitive tourism sector, pillar for the development of the county economy
6. A multipolar and territorially balanced developed county

Among the main large-scale investment projects planned by the county council, we emphasize:

I. CREANGĂ'S LAND - Recreation complex in Târgu Neamț Town

CREANGĂ'S Land is designed as a multiple-leisure recreation complex, based on the local brand "Ion Creangă" (famous Romanian writer) and his home village Humulești, comprising archaic and traditional elements, harmoniously integrated with modern elements, with a large variety of entertainment and relaxation facilities. The complex will include several thematic areas, among which:

- ❖ Creangă's village - a faithful reproduction of the old village, with all its components;
- ❖ an area with commercial and public food facilities, built according to the time when the writer lived, where local food products will be marketed, as well as handicrafts of folk art, naive painting, painting on glass or wood, various other souvenirs;
- ❖ traditional craft workshops (pottery, sewing, weaving) will be opened;
- ❖ an area for sports: football, tennis, volleyball, handball, mini football, table tennis, swimming pool, roller skating rink, skateboard, ice rink, skating rink, toboggan run, areas for other games and winter competitions and so on
- ❖ accommodation units, spa & wellness units, saline etc.
- ❖ a concert hall and outdoor amphitheatre for music, dance, theatre festivals, along with entertainment areas, outdoor movie areas, nightclubs.
- ❖ recreation and relaxation areas which will include a park, walkways, banks, chess tables, garden towers and shades, traditional fountain with wooden bucket for drinking water etc.

II. **NEAMȚ INDUSTRIAL PARK - a viable business infrastructure**, provided by Neamț County and managed through a management company having Neamț County as majority shareholder, whose initial patrimony is expected to consist of 7.097 acres of land, located in the South-West of Piatra Neamț, at about 2 km distance from Piatra Neamț residential area, at 4 km from the city centre and less than 10 km from the former chemical industrial platform in Săvinești. Its main objective is to set up the partnerships between the business environment and the public administration for the purpose of the economic and social development of the region.

III. SKIING IN ROMANIA – DURĂU RESORT

Durău Resort is recommended for resting and the treatment of asthenic neurosis, weakness, anemia, restoring after mental or intellectual efforts and practicing winter sports. The white season runs from December to March.

Among the specific objectives of the investment project are:

- rehabilitation and efficient use of the existing ski slope, cable transport infrastructure, facilities and utilities;
- building a new ski slope and cableway installation on the northern slope of the massif of Ceahlău, between the altitude of 550 and 800 m.

IV. THE “FORTRESS” PARK AND THE TOWN’S OUTDOOR POOL IN TÂRGU NEAMȚ

With a total surface of 5.486 acres, the „Fortress” Park is one of the most important maintained green spaces in Târgu Neamț. The general aims of the project are:

- the modernization of the touristic infrastructure and services;
- the diversification of leisure facilities, both for the town’s inhabitants as well as for tourists;
- increasing the quality of the environment through the reduction of pollution and increasing the general aesthetics of the town;
- building of an outdoor pool, as well as an indoor pool.

V. TOURISM AND HEALTH – “BĂILE OGLINZI” Spa Resort

With a history of over a century, “BĂILE OGLINZI” Spa Resort is a renowned spa resort in Romania, ideal for a restful holiday or for treatment. This spa treatment facility is dedicated to the treatment of rheumatic, gynecological, dermatological, respiratory diseases, asthenic neurosis as well as treatments with: ultrasounds, hot tub baths, galvanic baths, medical gymnastics.

The project aims the rehabilitation, development, promotion and repositioning of “BĂILE OGLINZI” Spa Resort on the health tourism market, along with the development of local tourism and leisure infrastructure.